

*CLOSING PEACHTREE AND PINE –
EVALUATING HOMELESS STRATEGIES
IN ATLANTA, GEORGIA*

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Introduction

Homelessness is a significant issue facing the United States as a whole, but urban areas tend to face the brunt of the challenge. As one of the largest metro areas in the U.S., and the largest city in the State of Georgia, Atlanta has 35 percent of the state's homeless population. In 2017, Atlanta's homeless population was 3,572 on a given night. This equates to 75.6 homeless per 10,000 people in the general population, more than four times the national homelessness rate ("Georgia - National Alliance to End Homelessness," 2017) ("State of Homelessness - National Alliance to End Homelessness," n.d.). There is still much work to be done to address homelessness in Atlanta. However, homelessness is a lightning rod issue, eliciting concern and empathy from many citizens, but still garnering NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) responses when it comes time to site shelters and services meant to reduce homelessness.

In 2017, Atlanta's most well-known homeless shelter, Peachtree and Pine, was closed due to poor management practices, financial delinquency, and unlivable conditions (Torpy, 2017) (Partners for HOME staff, personal interview, November 2018). Peachtree and Pine's closure has been seen as both a success and a failure among homelessness-focused organizations in Atlanta. Partners for HOME, Atlanta's continuum of care, the United Way, and other organizations involved with the closure see it as a success that resulted in permanent housing solutions for many individuals who had been residing at the shelter. However, the Metro Atlanta Task Force for the Homeless has expressed negative opinions regarding the closure. As such a visible emblem of homelessness in Atlanta, the outcome of Peachtree and Pine's closure has important implications for determining whether Atlanta's approach to addressing homelessness is successful or not.

This applied research paper uses interviews and local data to illustrate the outcomes to individuals experiencing homelessness due to Peachtree and Pine's closure and determine whether its closure is part of a successful strategy to reduce and eliminate homelessness in Atlanta.

Literature review

Why is there a need for this literature review?

Urban planners often work to create smart cities, zone land for the highest and best economic development, construct new roads, build state of the art public transportation, and address climate change. Planners are required to engage their communities and the general public. People experiencing homelessness are a part of these communities and general public, but do really planners engage them? Planners are called to advocate for the most marginalized citizens through the American Planning Association's code of ethics (American Planning Association [APA] 2016); surely those experiencing homelessness are included in this category. It is necessary to determine how planners currently engage homeless populations in planning processes and how planning decisions impact those experiencing homelessness to determine if the planning profession is adequately considering this population. This literature review addresses these topics both broadly and in Atlanta, specifically. It details important homeless definitions, causes of homelessness, ways planners and homeless individuals interact, public perceptions of homelessness, strategies for addressing and preventing homelessness, and the Atlanta-specific homeless environment.

Criteria for determining literature to review

Google Scholar and Georgia Institute of Technology databases were used to locate literature from urban planning and social sciences journals using the term “homeless.” Gray literature was also consulted from the city of Atlanta and state of Georgia to determine a regional context.

Overall statement about where the literature points

Throughout 30 years of homelessness literature, key causal observations have been documented. Homelessness is not a sudden event attributable to isolated emergencies or individual deficiencies. Rather, it is the culmination of a long process of economic hardship, isolation, and social dislocation: the cycle of homelessness. The cycle is a reflection of social, economic, and political patterns, rather than individual characteristics. Furthermore, being homeless diminishes one’s capacity to get out of the cycle. Treating homelessness as a discrete event masks underlying social and economic structural failings, such as government-backed national deindustrialization and deinstitutionalization, and impeding affordable housing through exclusionary zoning and demolishing single room occupancy units. However, a true homelessness definition is difficult to establish because structural definitions do not capture the full homeless population but incorporating social isolation into the definition makes it difficult to accurately count (Wolch, Dear, & Akita, 1988) (Elwood & Lawson, 2016) (Giles, 2016).

Where additional research is needed

While much research has been conducted on causes of and potential solutions to homelessness, several specific topics require more research.

Most research does not actually engage people who previously experienced homelessness or are currently homeless. It is important to include their perspectives on community solutions to

homelessness. Additionally, to better inform homeless solutions, it is important to determine if volunteering or interacting with homeless populations results in lower social distance from formerly homeless individuals (Phillips, 2015).

Additionally, research has shown that the baby boomer population is overrepresented among the homeless. Additional studies should determine the best approaches to target this particular homeless group (Byrne, Munley, Fargo, Montgomery, & Culhane, 2013). Studies also need to both include additional determinants of homelessness, such as immigration, and review determinants by homeless sub-populations, such as families, people with serious mental illness, veterans, and chronically homeless, when attempting to determine homelessness causes (Lee, Price-Spratlen, & Kanan, 2003) (Byrne, Munley, Fargo, Montgomery, & Culhane, 2013).

Ultimately, homelessness research requires a combination of structural and individual-level methods. However, data sets do not facilitate this type of research. To conduct a study that combined structural and individual methods, one would need “pools of vulnerable people in multiple locations for whom homeless or non-homeless outcomes are recorded after contextual and individual characteristics have been measured.” This is still out of reach (Lee, Price-Spratlen, & Kanan, 2003).

Homelessness literature themes

1. Homeless definitions

The U.S. department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) categorizes four types of homeless individuals: Literally Homeless, Imminent Risk of Homelessness, Homeless under other Federal Statutes, and Fleeing/Attempting to Flee Domestic Violence (HUD, n.d.).

Subsequently, federal programs target these populations to different extents. Federal programs

include Supportive Services, Safe Havens, Transitional Housing, Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), Street Outreach, Emergency Shelter, Rapid Rehousing, and Homelessness Prevention. However, significant eligibility limitations exist in these services. The only interventions open to all four homeless population categories are: Supportive Services, Transitional Housing, and Emergency Shelter. Other services are limited only to individuals, not families, and preventive programs must target only those with incomes below 30 percent of area median income (AMI) (HUD, n.d.).

Table 1. HUD Homeless Definitions

Literally Homeless	(1) Individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning: (i) Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation; (ii) Is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state and local government programs); or (iii) Is exiting an institution where (s)he has resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution
Imminent Risk of Homelessness	(2) Individual or family who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence, provided that: (i) Residence will be lost within 14 days of the date of application for homeless assistance; (ii) No subsequent residence has been identified; and (iii) The individual or family lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing Homeless
Homeless under other Federal Statutes	(3) Unaccompanied youth under 25 years of age, or families with children and youth, who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under this definition, but who: (i) Are defined as homeless under the other listed federal statutes; (ii) Have not had a lease, ownership interest, or occupancy agreement in permanent housing during the 60 days prior to the homeless assistance application;

	(iii) Have experienced persistent instability as measured by two moves or more during in the preceding 60 days; and (iv) Can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time due to special needs or barriers
Fleeing/Attempting to Flee DV	(4) Any individual or family who: (i) Is fleeing, or is attempting to flee, domestic violence; (ii) Has no other residence; and (iii) Lacks the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing

Source: HUD, n.d.

Beyond these four categories of homelessness, chronically homeless is a category within homeless populations that includes anyone who has been homeless for a year or more or has been homeless four or more times in three years and has a disabling condition. Additionally, the terms sheltered and unsheltered are key for distinguishing homeless populations. Sheltered refers to those who are homeless and reside in emergency shelters. Unsheltered means individuals are homeless and not residing in a shelter. This is also often called street homelessness (City of Atlanta Innovation Delivery Team, 2014).

In defining homelessness, HUD mandates a Point in Time count (PIT) to quantify the nation's homeless population. The PIT is a relatively recent approach to counting homeless populations, which first occurred through informant-based interviews, and then with a strategy called S-Night. S-Night was conducted by the Census and aimed to count homeless individuals through direct observation, in shelters and on streets (Lee, Price-Spratlen, & Kanan, 2003). Now, continuum of cares (CoC), geographic units throughout the United States in which homelessness service providers share federal resources and work together to develop strategic homelessness plans, execute the PIT during January of each year to determine the best estimate of homeless population (Byrne, Munley, Fargo, Montgomery, & Culhane, 2013). This is reported as a

discrete number but also as the number of homeless per 10,000 residents, allowing for meaningful comparison between cities (Lee, Price-Spratlen, & Kanan, 2003).

2. Causes of homelessness

Many researchers have dedicated resources to defining homelessness and its causes. Though early studies focused on individual level studies, suggesting personal characteristics and individual factors as causes of homelessness, the approach has shifted to community level research, illuminating several accepted causes of homelessness. These include: housing markets, economic conditions, safety net programs, community transience, and climate (Byrne, Munley, Fargo, Montgomery, & Culhane, 2013). Specific factors within these causes are detailed below.

Table 2. Causes of Homelessness

Causes of Homelessness	Individual Factors	Impact on Homelessness
Housing Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing shortages • Increasing rent levels • Expensive homeownership • Decrease of federal spending on housing • Increasing construction costs • Capitalist housing markets • Loss of low-income housing subsidies • Rental vacancy • SRO conversion and demolition • Community opposition to affordable housing • Exclusionary zoning of shelters, services, and subsidized units 	↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↑ ↑
Economic Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow growing wages 	↑ ↑

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unequal global economic processes • Poverty • Deindustrialization • Unemployment rates • Gentrification • Urban Renewal 	↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑
Safety Net Programs (temporary assistance for needy families, supplemental security income, general assistance, services for people with physical/mental disabilities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of social support programs • Reduction in welfare spending • Reduction in assisted units 	↑ ↑ ↑
Community Transience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of roads • Residential mobility • Student population • Tourism • Migrant labor 	↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑

Source: (Appelbaum, Dolny, Dreier, & Gilderbloom, 1991) (Elwood & Lawson, 2016) (Giles, 2016) (Byrne, Munley, Fargo, Montgomery, & Culhane, 2013) (Wolch, Dear, & Akita, 1988) (Lee, Price-Spratlen, & Kanan, 2003)

Rent levels are one of the strongest predictors of homelessness (Lee, Price-Spratlen, & Kanan, 2003). One study found an increase of \$100 in fair market rent indicates a 15 percent increase in unsheltered homeless population (Giles, 2016). Additionally, as homeownership becomes more expensive, more people rent for longer, increasing competition for rental units. Furthermore, urban redevelopment activities and their accompanying gentrification sometimes crowd out low rent housing options (Appelbaum, Dolny, Dreier, & Gilderbloom, 1991) (Giles, 2016).

Governments, and therefore urban planners, support these activities that can cause homelessness, even subsidizing high-income development projects (Giles, 2016).

Besides structural causes of homelessness, there are individual events that can exacerbate an individual's risk of homelessness. Eviction, discharge from an institution, job loss, divorce or

domestic violence, and removal of welfare support can be individual events that cause homelessness (Wolch, Dear, & Akita, 1988).

There are also demographic composition and climatic patterns that are more likely to be associated with homelessness (Lee, Price-Spratlen, & Kanan, 2003) (Byrne, Munley, Fargo, Montgomery, & Culhane, 2013). While these are not causes of homelessness, they are key in understanding what areas may experience higher levels of homelessness. The demographic characteristics positively associated with homelessness include: African American, Hispanic, female headed households, single person households, and the size of the baby boomer population. The climate conditions that are positively associated with homelessness are moderate temperatures and low precipitation (Byrne, Munley, Fargo, Montgomery, & Culhane, 2013).

3. Interactions between individuals experiencing homelessness and planners

Though some urban planners may not think their transportation, land use, environmental, or economic development work impacts individuals experiencing homelessness, their work's presence in the public sphere, where those experiencing homelessness live, means it does. Thus, urban planners and homeless populations' interactions have both intentional and unintentional consequences.

Most obvious are intentional interactions. Some examples of these are planners' role in passing anti-sitting, anti-sleeping, anti-bum, and anti-camping laws, prohibiting public food sharing and public urination, increased vagrancy law enforcement, and enforcing park-watering policies to make them uninviting places for those experiencing homelessness to reside (Elwood & Lawson, 2016) (Giles, 2016) (Langegger & Koester, 2016), (Wolch, Dear, & Akita, 1988). These laws and actions dislocate individuals experiencing homelessness from their typical spaces and

hinders their ability to maintain hygiene, mobility, and daily routines. Some research argues that these actions deprive individuals experiencing homelessness their right to the city. With such laws in place, they cannot be anonymous in public like most non-homeless can (Langeegger & Koester, 2016).

Additionally, planning directors often have a role in siting homeless shelters and services. One study found that Planning Directors thought homeless shelters were the most controversial facility to site, over parking garages, incinerators, landfills, power plants, drug treatment centers, group homes for mentally disabled people, and group homes for those with AIDS. Planning directors thought homeless shelters change the community character of locations in which they are sited. Planners were also concerned that individuals experiencing homelessness loiter, become publicly intoxicated, harass people, disrupt businesses, diminish beauty and pleasantness for others, and decrease property values (Takahashi & Gaber, 1998) (Thanem, 2012). Thus, planning director's decisions for shelter and service sitings have immense impacts on the individuals experiencing homelessness that need those resources.

While planning directors view homeless shelters as the most controversial facility to site in a community, community residents do not see homeless shelters as controversial as siting landfills, prisons, or factories. Rather, they think it is on par with drug treatment centers, group homes for individuals with mental disabilities, and homes for people with AIDS. However, because homeless shelters are more commonly proposed than landfills, prisons, and factories, community opposition may seem louder for homeless shelters (Takahashi & Gaber, 1998).

Unintentional interactions between planners and individuals experiencing homelessness can be just as impactful as those that are intentional. At a most basic level, unsheltered homeless make a home of public spaces originally designed by urban planners, though planners did not design the spaces as homes (Thanem, 2012). Thus, characteristics of public space, though potentially unintentional, impact individuals experiencing homelessness on a daily basis. Additionally, since planners' spatial management of facilities and land use is particular to each community, regulation and individuals' experiences are particular to each community (Takahashi & Gaber, 1998). The presence or absence of public bathrooms impact one's ability to both maintain hygiene and distance oneself from a typical unkempt, homeless identity. Construction activity may deter individuals experiencing homelessness from specific areas, but once construction is complete, an area may be more or less attractive to an individual. For example, large, open, public spaces allow surveillance and diminish privacy while walls and plants can offer shelter and privacy (Thanem, 2012). Consequently, planners should think of policy relationally. Any policy that impacts public spaces, food, parking, zoning, education, and design policy, can be seen as homeless policy (Giles, 2016).

Furthermore, though planners impact individuals experiencing homelessness both intentionally and unintentionally, they do not interact with them enough. Homeless populations have a history of visibly opposing some planning developments, but planners do not necessarily invite homeless to participate in community engagement when working on public projects. So, although their actions impact this vulnerable population, because individuals experiencing homelessness are seen to make non-homeless people and planners feel uncomfortable or unsafe, planners do not welcome their participation (Thanem, 2012).

4. Public perceptions of homelessness

In addition to interactions with urban planning-influenced environments, decisions, and policies, Individuals experiencing homelessness have daily interactions with other citizens. Through these interactions, public perceptions of individuals experiencing homelessness and the concept of homelessness in general emerge. Three primary perceptions of homelessness exist in the United States: sin talk, system talk, and sick talk. Sin talk means individuals think homelessness occurs due to personal morality problems. System talk means individuals think homelessness occurs due to societal problems. Sick talk means individuals think homelessness occurs due to individual abnormalities or disorders (Gowan, 2010). While research only supports system talk and notes that sick talk may exacerbate potential for homelessness, stigma towards individuals experiencing homelessness is well documented (Phillips, 2015). Furthermore, while many non-homeless people state a willingness to help volunteer or donate money to end homelessness (Phillips, 2015), and view homelessness as out of an individual's control (Gowan, 2010), people still demonstrate stigma towards homeless and formerly homeless individuals (Phillips, 2015).

Beyond individual stigma, communities often recognize homelessness and its accompanying services as presences to rally against. Communities consistently demonstrate backlash against individuals experiencing homelessness in their communities (Wolch, Dear, & Akita, 1988). Furthermore, as homelessness is perceived by some as a disorder in society, an individual experiencing homelessness' claim to the city is typically disregarded (Langeegger & Koester, 2016).

5. Addressing and preventing homelessness

The literature on addressing and preventing homelessness falls into two categories: theoretical and actual interventions. Many studies find solutions that should theoretically address

homelessness, but due to political and societal expectations, are unpalatable, and therefore, have not been implemented. The rest of the literature documents solutions that have been taken to attempt to address and prevent homelessness.

Theoretical solutions, in responding to the causes of homelessness, should, “...uncouple the housing system from the rest of the private market system and make it respond to need; change the economic system so that all have a decent living wage; or provide government subsidies to provide housing for those who cannot get it through the private market (Giles, 2016).” Other research suggests increasing minimum wages, supporting the mentally ill, expanding Section 8 housing vouchers in areas with the highest homeless rates, creating a tax credit for low-income renters similar to the Earned Income Tax credit, and relaxing zoning requirements to incentivize more affordable housing construction (Appelbaum, Dolny, Dreier, & Gilderbloom, 1991) (Byrne, Munley, Fargo, Montgomery, & Culhane, 2013). While some cities have some of these solutions in place, most solutions have been created by non profit and volunteer groups to fill the lack of public response during the 1990s. As a result, though, homelessness and poverty in general, have become mostly depoliticized, with charity solutions providing the primary response to homelessness, rather than government action (Giles, 2016).

Non profit and volunteer-based strategies to address homelessness include food banks, soup kitchens, and emergency shelters. However, these strategies treat homelessness as a passing economic condition (Giles, 2016). Even with the addition of nonprofit and volunteer-provided physical and social services, and housing assistance (Giles, 2016) (Wolch, Dear, & Akita, 1988), voluntary charity has been normalized as the primary force to address homelessness, rather than

public action (Giles, 2016). However, solutions that have combined public and nonprofit action and seen some success in addressing homelessness include coordinated homeless outreach, intake, and assessment, having a single point of entry for homeless services, maintaining a strong information system, collaborating between city, county, and state, serving the most vulnerable populations first, providing training to service providers, and prioritizing housing solutions (City of Atlanta Innovation Delivery Team, 2014).

Specific housing assistance solutions widely employed are Rapid Re-Housing and Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) as parts of the Housing First approach. Housing First is a community integrated approach that prioritizes permanent housing for homeless (Phillips, 2015). The belief supporting this approach is that people need basic necessities like food and housing before getting a job, budgeting, or controlling substance abuse issues; housing is the foundation of life improvement. (“Housing First - National Alliance to End Homelessness,” 2016). Thus, Rapid Re-Housing is short term rental assistance and services with low or no barriers to housing for individuals experiencing homelessness. Its core components are housing identification, rental and move in assistance, and case management (“Rapid Re-Housing - National Alliance to End Homelessness,” n.d.). PSH combines affordable housing assistance and support services to chronically homeless people. It’s designed to help individuals get to independent living and connects people with health care, treatment, and employment services (“Permanent Supportive Housing - National Alliance to End Homelessness,” n.d.).

While Housing First is often described in contrast to providing shelter services, the literature indicates that homeless solutions should target both the producers of homelessness and its symptoms. Both preventative and emergency solutions are necessary to fully address homelessness. Emergency solutions, such as shelters and soup kitchens help individuals currently suffering, and preventative solutions provide long term strategies. Experiences an individual has while homeless, such as shelter quality, directly impact whether he or she escapes homelessness, so it is necessary to maintain both long term and emergency strategies to adequately address homelessness (Wolch, Dear, & Akita, 1988).

6. Atlanta specific context

Georgia's homeless population is 10,174 on a given night, with 9.9 homeless per 10,000 people in the general population. Atlanta's homeless population is 3,572 on a given night with 75.6 homeless per 10,000 people in the general population. The unsheltered population has fallen significantly in the state since 2012 but increased from 2016 to 2017. Most families experiencing homelessness, 93 percent, are sheltered, while only 55 percent of individuals experiencing homelessness are sheltered ("Georgia - National Alliance to End Homelessness," 2017). To address this population, Atlanta makes use of HUD resources via its status as an Entitlement Community. Thus, Atlanta receives 4 annual entitlement grants from HUD. These are Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), Home Investment Partnership program (HOME), Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), and Housing Opportunities for Person with AIDS program (HOPWA). HUD's objectives for these grants are low-income affordable housing, homeless prevention, and services for persons living with AIDS. (*CITY OF ATLANTA 2016 COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN*, n.d.).

Atlanta also highlights addressing homelessness in its most recent consolidated plan. Homeless assistance is one of the top two priorities of the housing section of the plan and defines the following objectives: “assist homeless persons to move towards stable, economically sustainable, long-term housing” and “assist low/moderate income persons to avoid homelessness and remain housed.” The plan identifies housing cost burden, where housing costs exceed 30 percent of household income as the most serious problem for Atlanta’s low/moderate income households (*CITY OF ATLANTA 2016 COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN*, n.d.). This means prevention should be a key focus for Atlanta’s homeless strategies.

As of 2013, 68 percent of Atlanta’s homeless population was in emergency or transitional housing and 32 percent were unsheltered. Although the 2013 homeless census was 5,571, over the course of a year, 16,000 people in Atlanta were homeless. Chronic homeless accounted for 38 percent of the homeless population, 32 percent had mental health and substance abuse issues, 39 percent had a felony, 54 percent had a serious health condition, 20 percent were veterans, and 48 percent were over age 50. As of 2013, Atlanta had strong basic services such as food, but lacked critical services, such as housing and supportive services, including mental health and substance abuse services/treatment (City of Atlanta Innovation Delivery Team, 2014). However, 2009-2014 saw progress in addressing homelessness in Atlanta. 1,800 formerly homeless families were rehoused with tenant based rental assistance and 11,800 homeless persons were helped each year with shelter, medical services, legal aid, crisis support, employment support, and permanent housing (*CITY OF ATLANTA 2016 COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN*, n.d.).

Atlanta's Section 8 program has room for growth. As of the writing of the comprehensive development plan, the Office of Housing and Community Development (HCD) funded 4 properties to rent out just 190 units. 146 units were single-room occupancy while the other 44 units were for families. HCD also encouraged property owners to work with nonprofit groups and governmental agencies to provide supportive services, but as the plan states, this was only encouraged and not mandated. HCD also worked with Atlanta Housing, previously Atlanta Housing Authority, to implement a 150-voucher supportive housing program, *Flow*, to individuals and families that graduate from transitional housing into stable housing. (*CITY OF ATLANTA 2016 COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN*, n.d.).

In 2012, the city used ESG funds to engage individuals experiencing homelessness on the street to improve the quality and number of shelters, rapidly re-house individuals, and provide services to them through a strategy called "Unsheltered No More." The ultimate goal of this program was to coordinate services to reduce homelessness and house 800 individuals using accelerated placement tools and coordinating services (*CITY OF ATLANTA 2016 COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN*, n.d.).

Through "Unsheltered No More," Partners for Home, the nonprofit entity charged with managing the Atlanta continuum of care for homeless services, was created. Partners for Home works to secure funds and align services and strategies across homeless services providers. Its priority focus is the most vulnerable and chronically homeless individuals and uses a Housing First approach. In addition, Partners for Home has 6 priorities for its service members:

1. Adopt Housing First Model

2. PSH for Single Adult Men
3. PSH and Rapid Re-housing for families
4. Coordinated intake and assessment to determine individual needs
5. Leverage mainstream funding
6. Consistent participation in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

Since Partners for Home's creation, the city's unsheltered homeless population has decreased by 50 percent (*CITY OF ATLANTA 2016 COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN*, n.d.).

"Unsheltered No More" and Partners for Home moved 1,022 people into housing thanks to a central homeless registry and a developer-led central housing inventory of available units (City of Atlanta Innovation Delivery Team, 2014).

Critique/Limitations of literature

Homelessness literature suffers from two major limitations. Studies that use homelessness counts often struggle with finding accurate homelessness counts. Original HUD homeless data neglected 275 metro areas and often relied on informant judgements rather than actual counts (Lee, Price-Spratlen, & Kanan, 2003). However, the recent development of the PIT count has improved this issue. Studies that use individual responses and perspectives of homelessness may not always be representative of the opinions of the broader population (Phillips, 2015). While they provide an understanding of individuals' feelings about and reactions to homelessness, something not available through the PIT count, they may not accurately represent public opinions towards individuals experiencing homelessness or homelessness as a public issue.

Methods

This research aims to illustrate the outcomes to individuals experiencing homelessness due to Peachtree and Pine's closure and determine whether its closure is part of a successful strategy to reduce and eliminate homelessness in Atlanta.

The methods used to conduct this research include local news research, interviews with individuals working in homeless services, and GIS mapping of homeless services, transportation infrastructure, and demographic data.

Interviews established an account of outcomes and details of the Peachtree and Pine closure. Interviews were challenging to conduct with those working in the homeless services sector because the day to day needs of their partners and populations are so intense. The initial interview list included representatives from the list below. I was able to contact most of these groups, but their availability was understandably limited.

- Partners for HOME
- Georgia Supportive Housing Association
- Enterprise Community Partners
- Neighborworks
- United Way
- The Gateway Center
- Open Doors Atlanta

These interviews provided various community perspectives about the shelter's closure. Partners for HOME leads Atlanta's Continuum of Care, the entity ensuring Atlanta's homeless providers have access to federal funds ("Partners For HOME | Making Homelessness in Atlanta Rare and

Brief,” n.d.). This was a key organization to interview as they oversaw the closure of Peachtree and Pine. The rest of the organizations from which I interviewed individuals were involved in Peachtree and Pine’s closure to differing extents.

Georgia Supportive Housing Association is a non-profit that works to create and preserve supportive housing in Georgia (“Home | Georgia Supportive Housing Association,” n.d.). Individuals requiring supportive housing and individuals experiencing homelessness are not the exact same population, but there is significant overlap. Very often, individuals experiencing homelessness also suffer from serious and persistent mental illness (SPMI). Furthermore, these are often the most difficult individuals house, since they require additional supportive services (Georgia Supportive Housing Association Staff, personal interview, February 2019).

Enterprise Community Partners and *NeighborWorks* are both national organizations working to expand affordable housing and housing stability (“Policy Priorities | Enterprise Community Partners,” n.d.) (“About Us - NeighborWorks America,” n.d.). Individuals in the Atlanta offices of both of these organizations were aware of the shelter’s closing and the surrounding efforts (Enterprise Community Partners Staff, personal interview, January 2019) (Neighborworks Staff, personal interview, February 2019).

The United Way plays a large role in addressing homelessness in Atlanta. They lead the Regional Commission on Homelessness (RCOH) and were a major partner in the shelter’s closure. They managed facility operations during the closure and assisted in relocation efforts (“Peachtree-Pine Shelter FAQ - United Way of Greater Atlanta,” n.d.) (United Way Staff, personal interview, October, 2018).

The Gateway Center serves as a central information and access point for Atlanta homeless services. As the main portal to the Continuum of Care and part of the RCOH (“About Us | Gateway Center,” n.d.), its activities interact with both Partners for HOME and the United Way.

Open Doors ATL is a local organization founded by the Atlanta Real Estate Collaborative (AREC) in 2012 to connect those in need of a home and property owners needing tenants (“Open Doors ATL – Making connections to bring people home.,” n.d.). Ninety-five percent of their clients are individuals exiting homelessness.

GIS Mapping

GIS mapping of homeless services provided a spatial reference for Atlanta’s efforts to address homelessness. Interview information and internet searches provided a list of over 60 organizations in the city of Atlanta providing homeless services. These organizations were divided into categories: shelters, warming centers, transitional or permanent housing, financial services, or additional services such as employment coaching, medical care, and substance abuse counseling. However, this list is undoubtedly incomplete. The author made attempts to thoroughly research the breadth of organizations offering homeless services, but due to the informal nature of some of these services and lack of a physical location for some services, there are likely other organizations in Atlanta providing services not included in these maps.

In addition to these services, MARTA rail lines, demographics, unemployment rates, and income levels are also mapped to provide comparisons between homeless services, transportation, and potential causes of homelessness.

Results and Discussion

Immediate Impacts of Peachtree and Pine Closure

Peachtree and Pine closed August 28, 2017 due to a settlement of a long-running lawsuit

between the previous shelter operator, Metro Atlanta Task Force for the Homeless, the City of Atlanta, Central Atlanta Progress (CAP), and Emory Healthcare. In the lawsuit the Task Force accused the City, CAP, and Emory of conspiring to eliminate shelter funding and force its eviction from its physical structure (Henry, 2017). Meanwhile, consistent complaints about the shelter arose. It had significant drug and criminal activity, provided no meals to residents, and was poorly maintained. There were consistently cockroaches and rodents in the facility, providing inhumane conditions (Partners for HOME staff, personal interview, November 2018). Ultimately, the lawsuit ended in a settlement, awarding almost \$10 million to the Task Force and handing over the building to CAP (Henry, 2017).

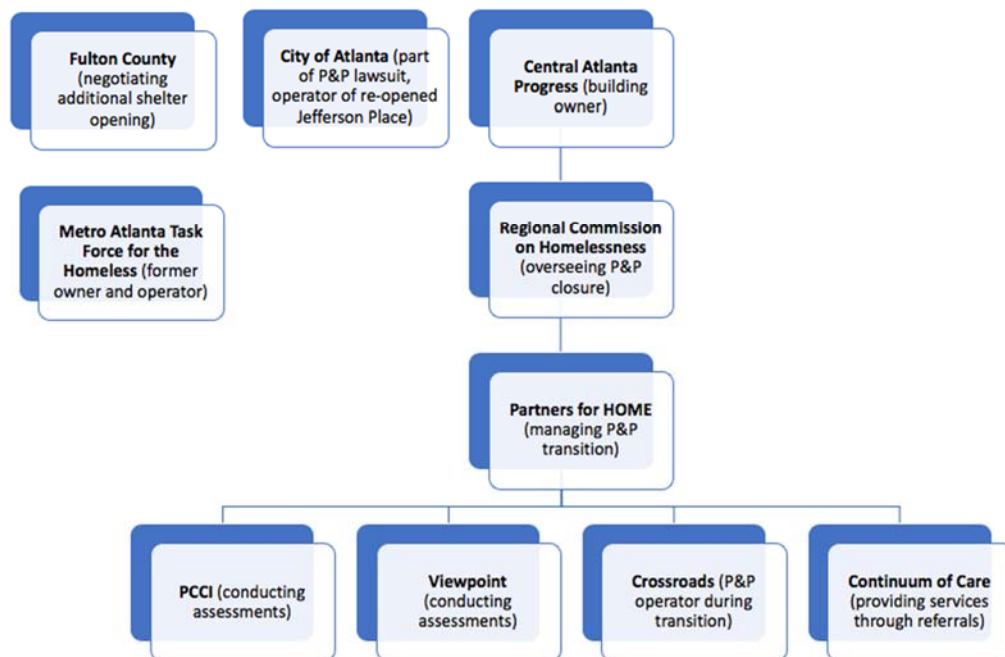
In the wake of this decision, Atlanta's Continuum of Care (CoC), created in 2014, and led by Partners for HOME, stepped in to manage the relocation of shelter residents. The CoC included over 100 agencies providing various services including transitional housing, drug treatment services, and education support (Henry, 2017). The United Way, Grady, and CAP were all key partners in the closure (Partners for HOME staff, personal interview, November 2018).

Peachtree and Pine was a well-known place in Atlanta's homeless community and had a very large capacity, making it a popular place for individuals experiencing homelessness (Partners for HOME staff, personal interview, November 2018). In January 2017, there were approximately 280 residents at Peachtree and Pine (Partners for HOME staff, personal interview, November 2018), but by July 2017, this number fell to 255 (Torpy, 2018). Because the closure was well-publicized, there was a possibility that the shelter experienced a slight influx of individuals from

other shelters seeking services in the first few weeks of the closure (Partners for HOME staff, personal interview, November 2018), but because it was summertime, overall numbers were lower at the shelter than other times of the year. Other accounts say some residents likely left Peachtree and Pine early, before the closure because they did not want to deal with the change in management (Torpy, 2017). Ultimately, the number of individuals at Peachtree and Pine upon its closure, 280, suggests there were fewer people at the shelter than typical.

Crossroads Community Ministries (Crossroads) operated the shelter during the transition and two organizations primarily handled housing assessments: Project Community Connections Inc. (PCCI) and Viewpoint. However, approximately 50 to 75 individuals were “lost” in the rehousing efforts. These individuals either declined services or left the shelter before Partners for HOME, PCCI, and Viewpoint assisted them.

Figure 1. Organizational Chart for Peachtree and Pine Closure



Source: Created by the author based on interviews and news articles

For those that were assessed, Viewpoint and PCCI assigned each person to one of two categories: rapid rehousing or supportive housing. Rapid rehousing services were for non-

disabled clients. Supportive housing, including housing vouchers, were for clients with disabilities. PCCI assessed clients and made rapid rehousing placements several days per week. Assessments occurred from July through November, but those involved with the closure continued to work with individuals at warming stations after the official final November 30th closing.

Table 3. Results of Peachtree and Pine Closure

	PCCI (Rapid Re-housing for non-disabled)	Viewpoint (Housing vouchers for chronically homeless or disabled)
Referrals	93	No data
Clients housed	65	91
Transfers	13	N/A
Refusals, No-shows, Cancellations	15	1

Source: (Partners for HOME staff, personal interview, November 2018)

PCCI, Viewpoint, and CoC partners made every effort to find housing for individuals at Peachtree and Pine. The Partners for Home approach is to find low barrier housing, with no tenant requirements, quickly. This meant matching clients to available and willing properties, more easily said than done. Atlanta's competitive housing market, landlord reluctance, NIMBYism, and homeless individuals hoping to find a home with a community component, all add difficulty to finding success in this approach (Partners for HOME staff, personal interview, November 2018). Furthermore, many individuals served at Peachtree and Pine were chronically homeless and had mental health and substance abuse challenges. Typically, this population is the hardest to serve; services need to be very robust (Enterprise staff, personal interview, January 2019). Accordingly, partners worked diligently and even wrote letters to judges to request they remove arrest warrants from individuals' records to more easily meet housing requirements. This

was successful and more individuals were housed because of these letters. Housing locations included Clayton County, Decatur, and the City of Atlanta. However, PCCI transitioned some individuals to other homeless shelters in very difficult housing cases (Partners for HOME staff, personal interview, November 2018).

Peachtree and Pine served primarily men during its operation, so men were also the main recipients of Partners for HOME's rehousing efforts. However, there were likely a few women and children who were at the shelter during the transition that received rehousing services as well (Henry, 2017). In addition to residents, some individuals assessed and rehoused during the closure were resident advisors. They lived in the shelter in exchange for working there. These individuals saw a huge improvement in their living conditions after being assessed and referred to different housing situations (Partners for HOME staff, personal interview, November 2018).

Lasting Impacts of Peachtree and Pine Closure (Current Homeless Statistics/Situation)

In addition to planning for housing shelter residents, Fulton County and the RCOH reopened Jefferson Place, a westside shelter previously closed, to house Peachtree and Pine residents (Henry, 2017). They added 100 new low barrier beds there, concurrently with Peachtree and Pine's closure. They also opened a new women's shelter in 2018, The Donna Center, somewhat in response to the closure. The Donna Center can house 30 single women and 5 families (Partners for HOME staff, personal interview, November 2018).

Case managers still work with individuals from Peachtree and Pine, as well as other individuals experiencing homelessness, to help them find services and housing (Partners for HOME staff, personal interview, November 2018). Matching individuals to available housing is a significant challenge in Atlanta's market. Open Doors ATL hopes to make this process easier. Open Doors

is a local organization founded by the Atlanta Real Estate Collaborative (AREC) in 2012 to connect those in need of a home and property owners needing tenants. Open Doors recognized that negative perceptions about individuals experiencing homelessness led property owners to shy away from assisting them. However, with the organized assistance of Open Doors to guarantee owners rental payments and help navigate fair housing rules, the program has helped house over 5,600 people. Ninety-five percent of residents assisted by Open Doors ATL are individuals exiting homelessness. Most also receive assistance from other programs as well, such as housing vouchers and rapid rehousing. Open Doors board members, many of which are part of AREC, find property owners through existing relationships. A property owner deciding to work with Open Doors signs a memorandum of understanding stating that Open Doors will list the property's vacancies for free and guarantee to fill the vacancies in exchange for reduced resident acceptance criteria (Open Doors staff, personal interview, February 2019).

Open Doors currently works with 173 properties scattered throughout DeKalb and Fulton counties and the city of Atlanta. The properties tend to be in the south and west sides of Atlanta. Areas of the city with higher affluence, north and northeast Atlanta, have been harder to get involved in taking on tenants exiting homelessness. Furthermore, recently, many metro-area properties have been sold and redeveloped, leading to higher rents. This makes Open Doors placements more difficult; 2018 saw 100 fewer placements than 2017 (Open Doors staff, personal interview, February 2019).

Additionally, since Peachtree and Pine's closure, although Atlanta's homeless population has decreased overall, the unsheltered homeless population has increased *POINT-IN-TIME COUNT 2018*, 2018). While the increase in unsheltered homeless cannot be directly attributed to

Peachtree and Pine’s closure, it is a potential factor since Peachtree and Pine was a low barrier, large, and well-known shelter. Additionally, the increase in Atlanta’s unsheltered homeless population, 59, is close to the 50 to 75 individuals that were lost in the rehousing process after Peachtree and Pine’s closure.

Table 4. Atlanta Homeless Count 2017 vs. 2018

	2017	2018	Change
Sheltered	2,891	2,336	- 555
Unsheltered	681	740	+ 59
Total	3,572	3076	- 496

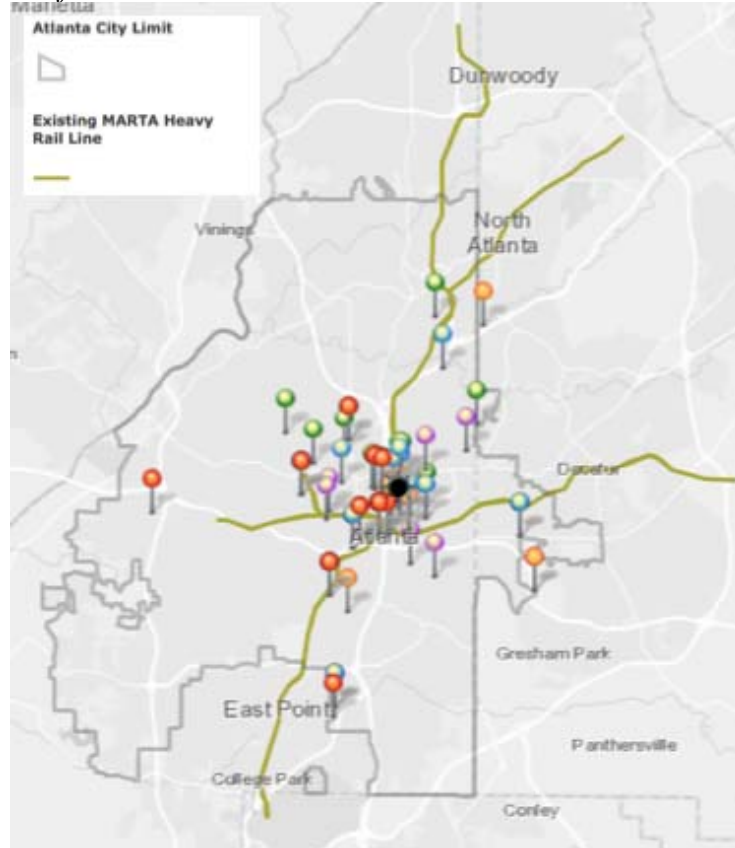
Table Source: (*POINT-IN-TIME COUNT 2018*, 2018)

Homeless Service Providers

After mapping homeless services, several comparisons can be made regarding distribution of services, transportation, demographic trends, and financial patterns.

Spatial Distribution of Homeless Services

Figure 2. Distribution of Homeless Services



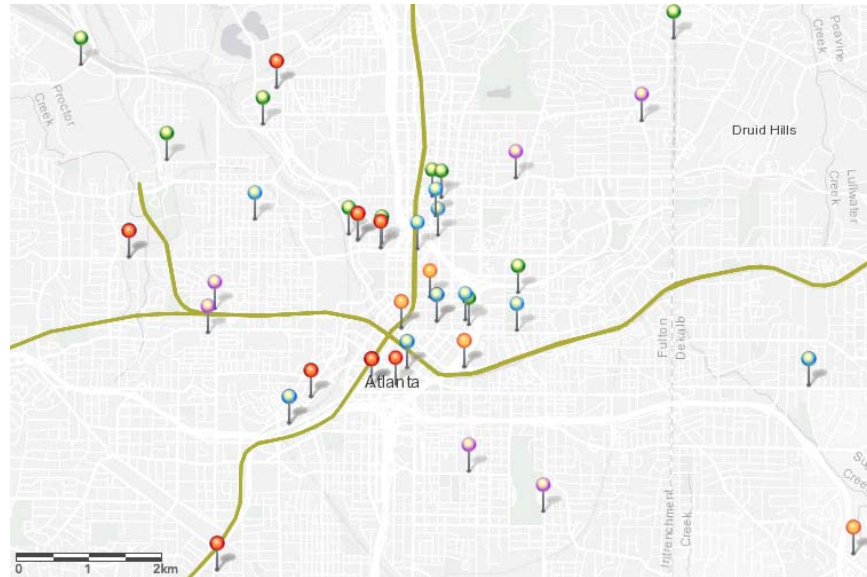
Source: Esri, ArcGIS Online and Author's creation

Services cluster in the center of Atlanta and skew to the north. Very few services are located in southwest Atlanta.

Homeless Services and MARTA

Many services are near MARTA heavy rail lines, but not all. Upon a closer look, a significant amount of services is not accessible via MARTA heavy rail.

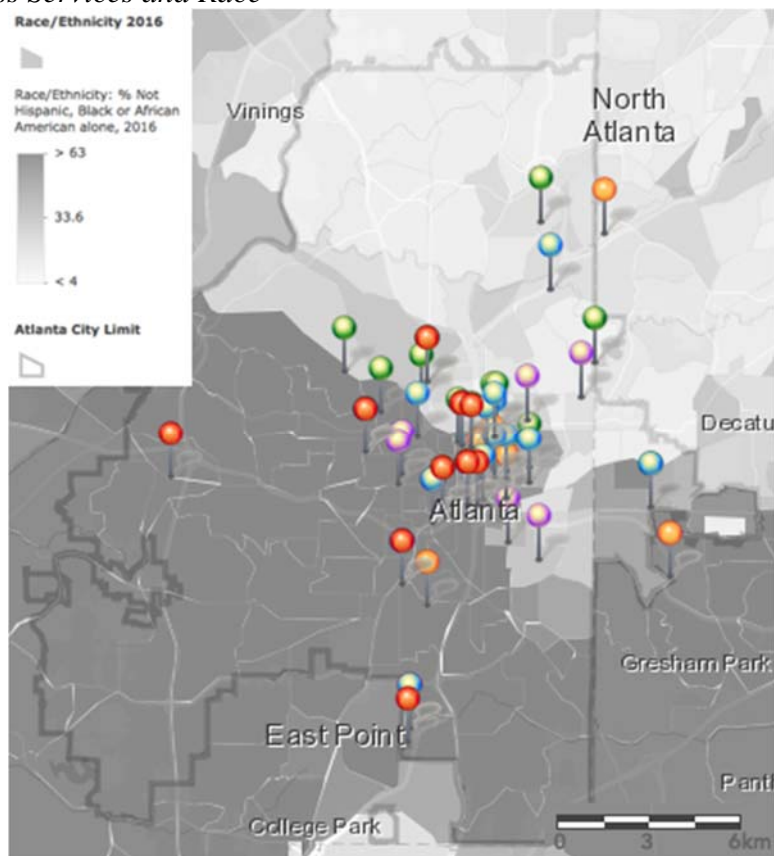
Figure 3. Homeless Services and MARTA



Source: Esri, ArcGIS Online and Author's creation

Homeless Services and Race

Figure 4. Homeless Services and Race

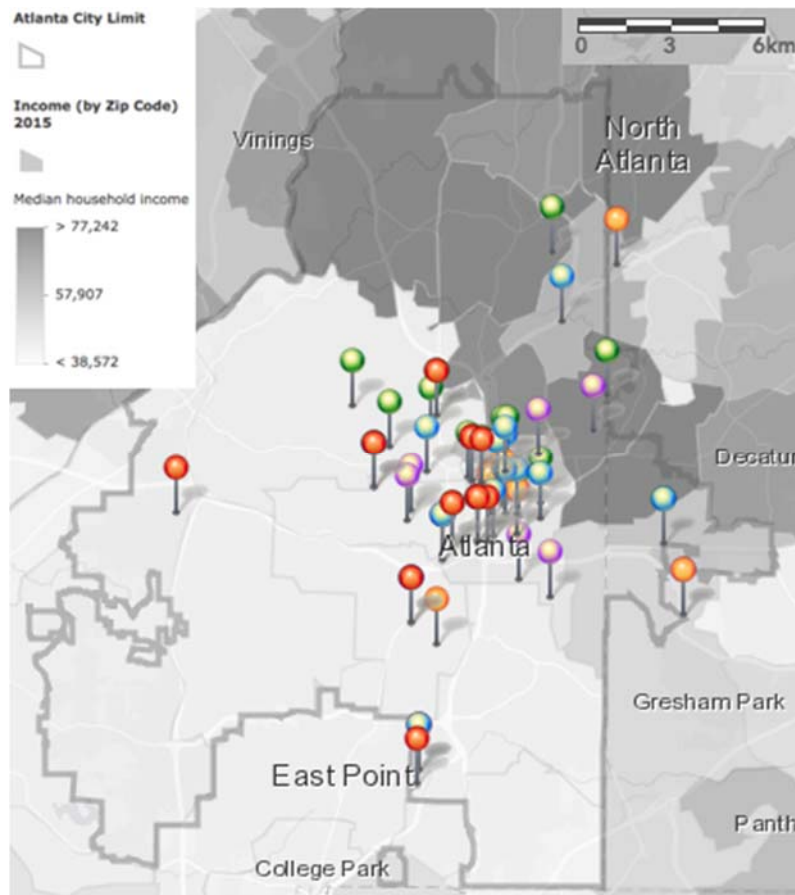


Source: Esri, ArcGIS Online and Author's creation

Most homeless services are clustered around areas where demographics shift between majority African American and majority White.

Homeless Services and Income

Figure 5. Homeless Services and Income

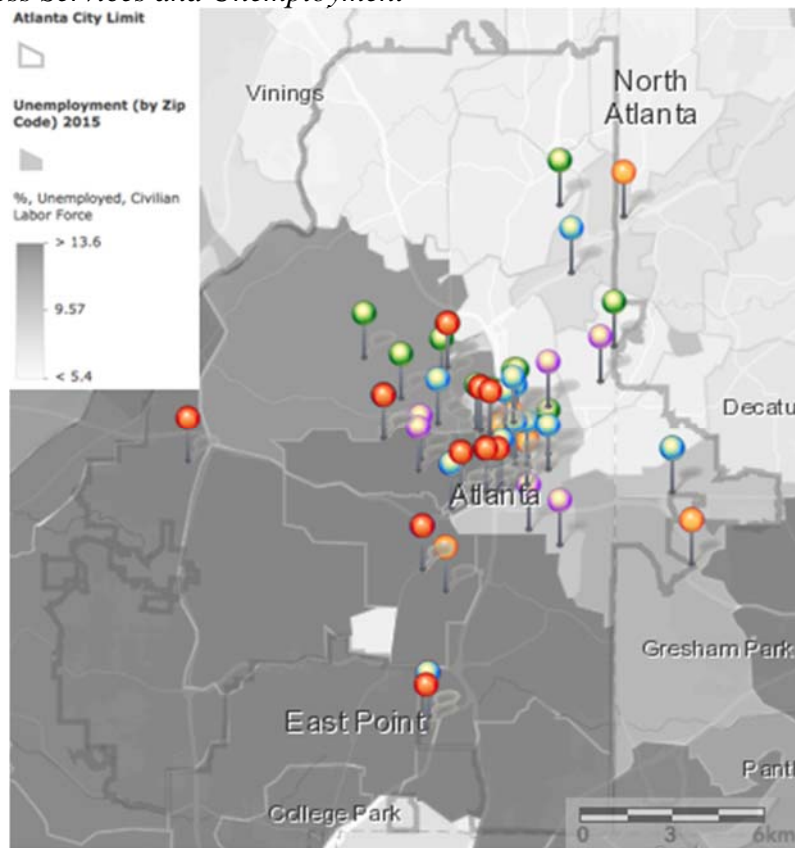


Source: Esri, ArcGIS Online and Author's creation

Most homeless services are located in low income areas. However, there are large portions of the city that are low income that lack any services, primarily the southwest portion. Additionally, there are several service providers scattered in very high income areas.

Homeless Services and Unemployment

Figure 6. Homeless Services and Unemployment



Source: Esri, ArcGIS Online and Author's creation

Most homeless services are located in high unemployment areas. However, there are large portions of the city that have high unemployment that lack any services, primarily the southwest portion. Additionally, there are several service providers scattered in very low unemployment areas.

Conclusions

Closure outcomes

The Peachtree and Pine closure was successful; it housed over 150 people that otherwise would have remained in the shelter indefinitely. This included 91 individuals receiving permanent supportive housing for chronically homeless and those with disabilities, which can often be the most difficult populations to house. Peachtree and Pine held a significant amount of Atlanta's homeless population and more than half of those who were at the shelter at the time of its closure received housing.

However, some individuals got lost in the process of closing Peachtree and Pine. Furthermore, in the wake of its closure, although Atlanta's homeless population has decreased overall, its unsheltered population has increased. This increase in unsheltered individuals cannot be solely attributed to Peachtree and Pine's closure, but it must be considered as a factor given the shelter's high capacity, low barriers to entry, and well-known reputation among the homeless community.

Market-driven solutions

Additionally, it is clear that market-driven solutions to create housing for homeless individuals are not sustainable. Although Partners for HOME and their CoC has coordinated and streamlined their referral process, the real estate market does not incentivize landlords to provide housing to formerly homeless individuals, even with the incredibly dedicated work of service partners. While Open Doors Atlanta is an innovative solution to finding excess housing, its decrease in housing placements from 2017 to 2018 is an indicator of where Atlanta's housing market is going. Relying on landlords to accept vouchers amid a real estate market in which they can easily redevelop their property and charge much higher rents means less money to house homeless individuals.

Spatial representation

A lack of easily accessible spatial representation of homeless services makes it difficult to analyze homelessness in relation to other local data. After undertaking a preliminary mapping exercise, homeless services seem to be concentrated in downtown Atlanta. This makes sense in relation to population density and accessibility, but upon closer analysis, services do not locate where precursors to homelessness, such as low income and unemployment, are most prominent. Most strikingly, Atlanta's southwest quadrant is almost entirely devoid of homeless services even though this area has high rates of unemployment and low-income. In a spatial sense, Atlanta's services do not attempt to prevent homelessness; they only treat homelessness.

It is also unclear whether housing placements made after Peachtree and Pine's closure have resulted in lower service accessibility for those transitioning out of homelessness. Although housing is the key need for individuals experiencing homelessness, they do not immediately cease needing other services simply because they have a home. Since housing placements, during Peachtree and Pine's closure and through Open Doors, are scattered across the city and other counties, and services are mostly offered in the city center, individuals may have difficulty reaching their services. This is of course difficult to determine without knowing specific re-housing locations. The author was not able to obtain re-housing locations as part of this research, and future mapping of this sort should be approached with caution. Mapping re-housing locations may result in privacy concerns and potentially increases in NIMBY attitudes towards homeless services. However, future research that examines the accessibility of services to re-housed individuals could be valuable.

Recommendations

Market-Driven Solutions

Homeless service providers and partners should incorporate evaluating real estate forecasts into strategic plans. Understanding the future housing landscape is key to determining whether markets are likely to naturally provide housing, as in an Open Doors model, or if housing markets are tighter and the homeless service community needs to take more direct action to create housing. Direct action may include raising money and engaging in the real estate market to secure additional units.

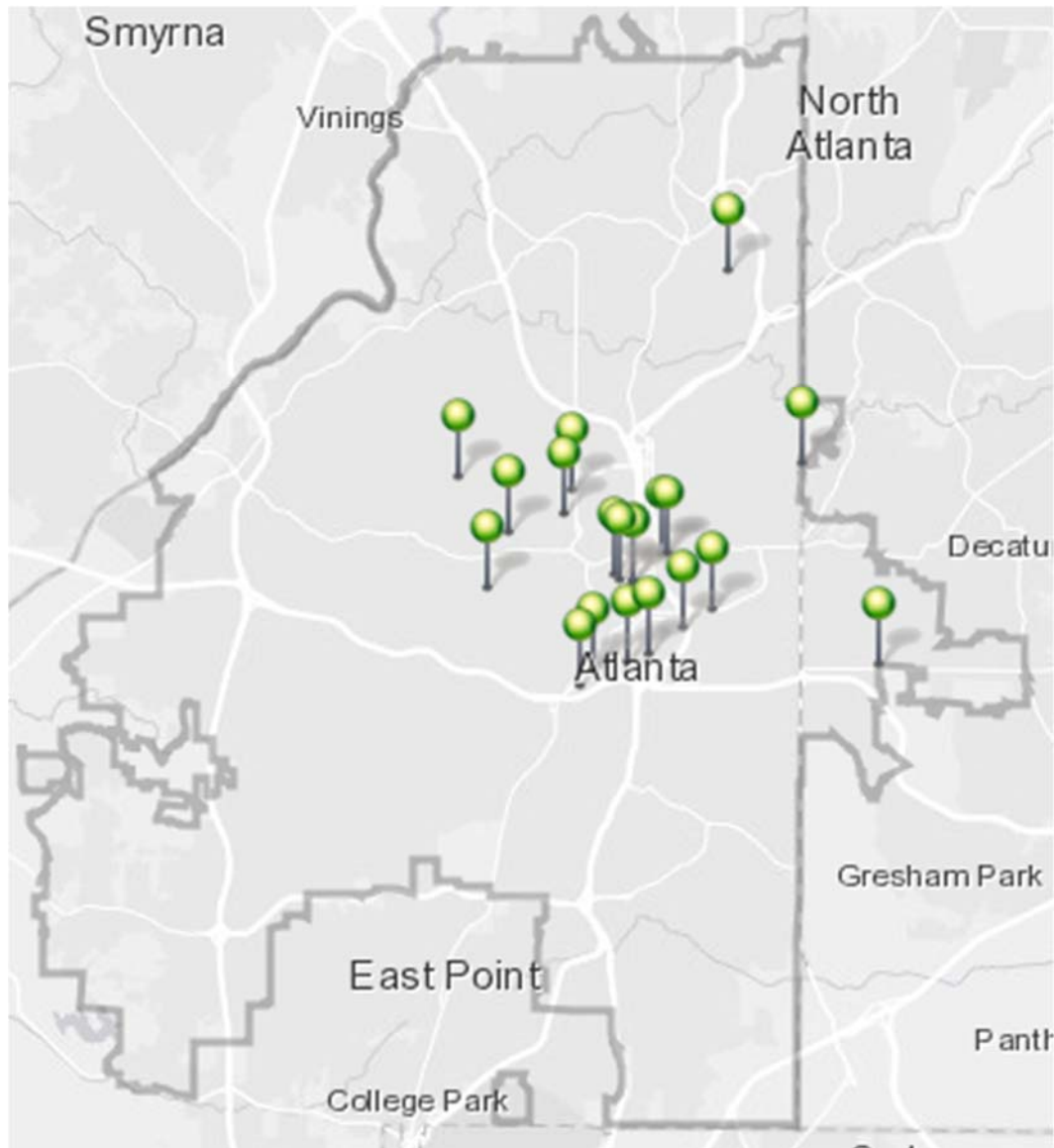
Spatial Representation

Homeless services should be more clearly differentiated between immediate response and prevention. If homeless services only focus on responding to existing needs of individuals experiencing homelessness, the community loses opportunities to prevent homelessness in the first place. Additionally, differentiating services would allow an easier determination of whether services are spatially balanced or clustered. Homeless services should have a root in vulnerable communities to work towards prevention. To accomplish this in Atlanta, future research should include conducting an inventory of where preventive services should be.

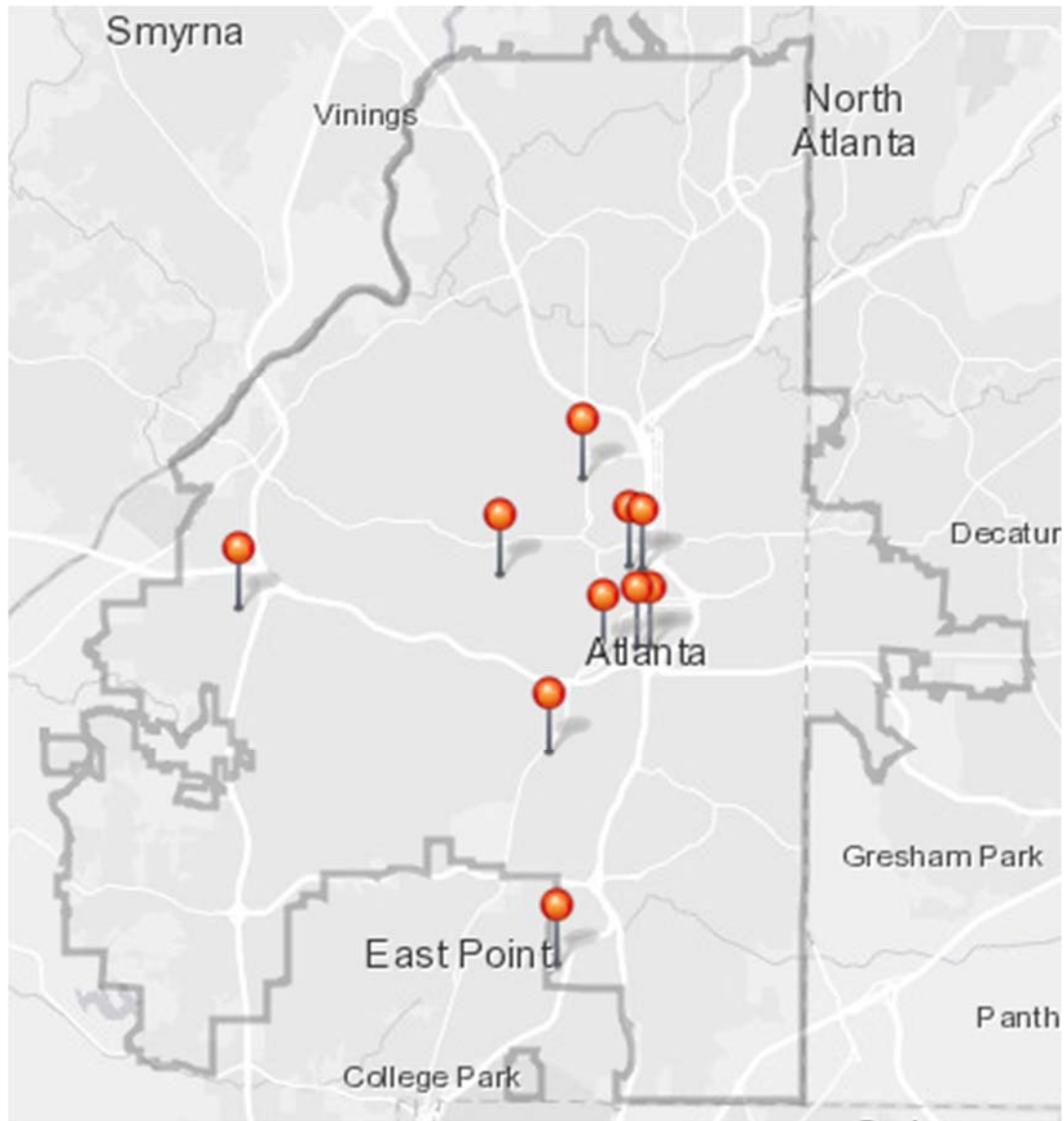
Service locations should also take into consideration where individuals previously experiencing homelessness are rehoused. Obtaining housing, while absolutely essential for those experiencing homelessness, is not the only need. Rehoused individuals may still need access to homeless-related services. Observing whether rehousing locations are accessible to services is important to determine whether rehoused individuals are isolated from other services and potentially vulnerable to experiencing homelessness again.

Appendix 1 - Additional Maps - Homeless Services by Type

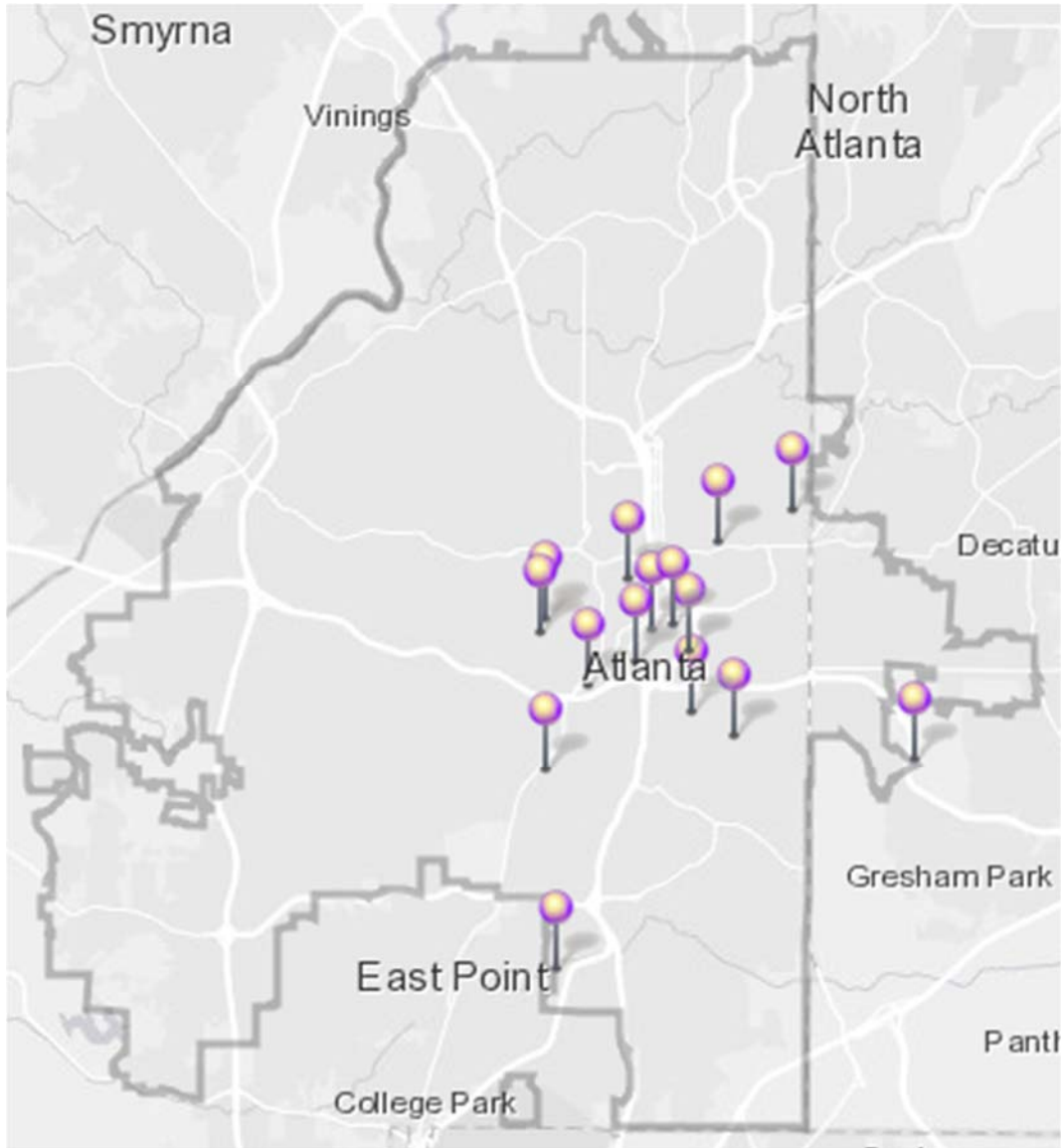
Homeless Shelters



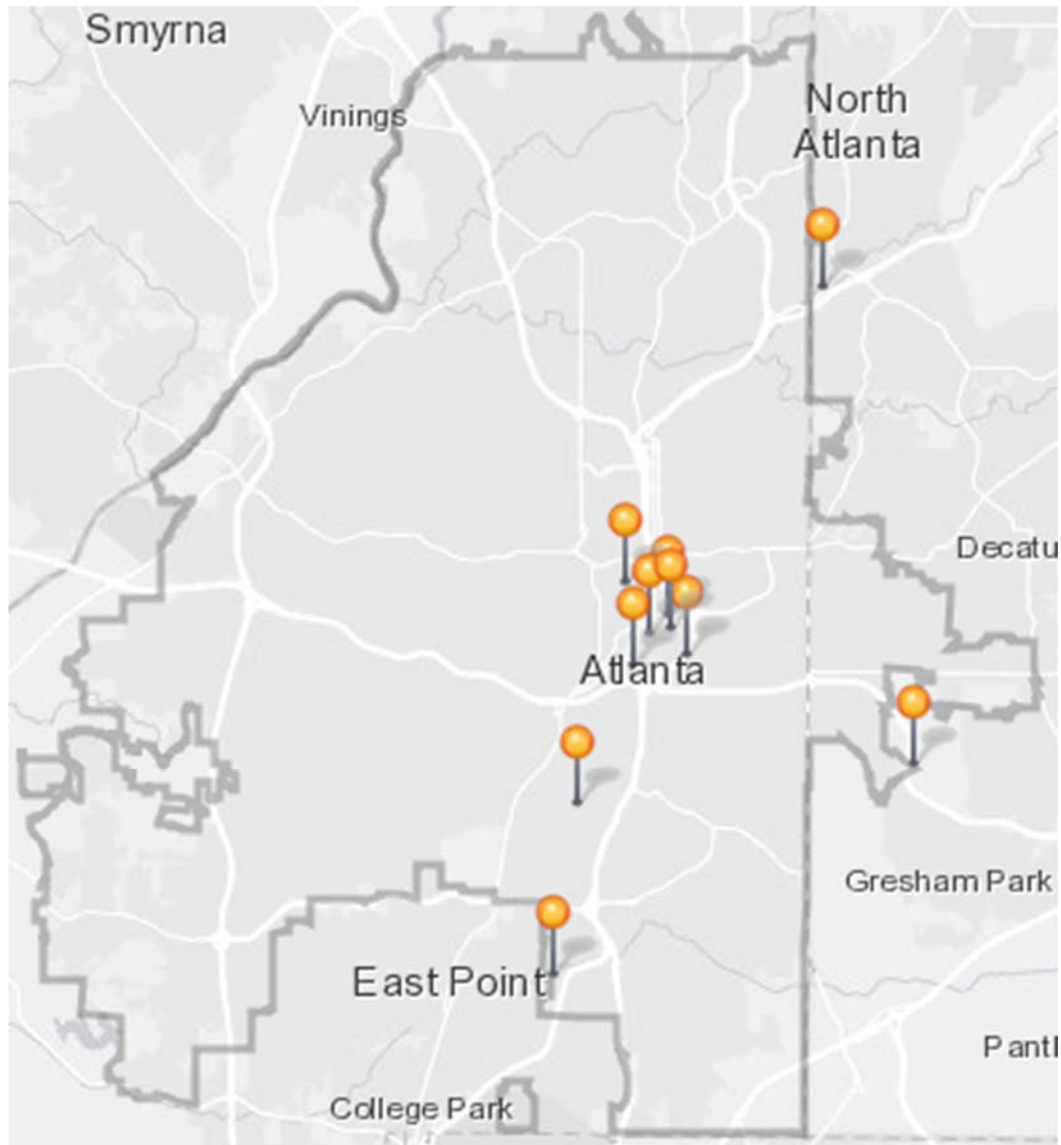
Warming Centers



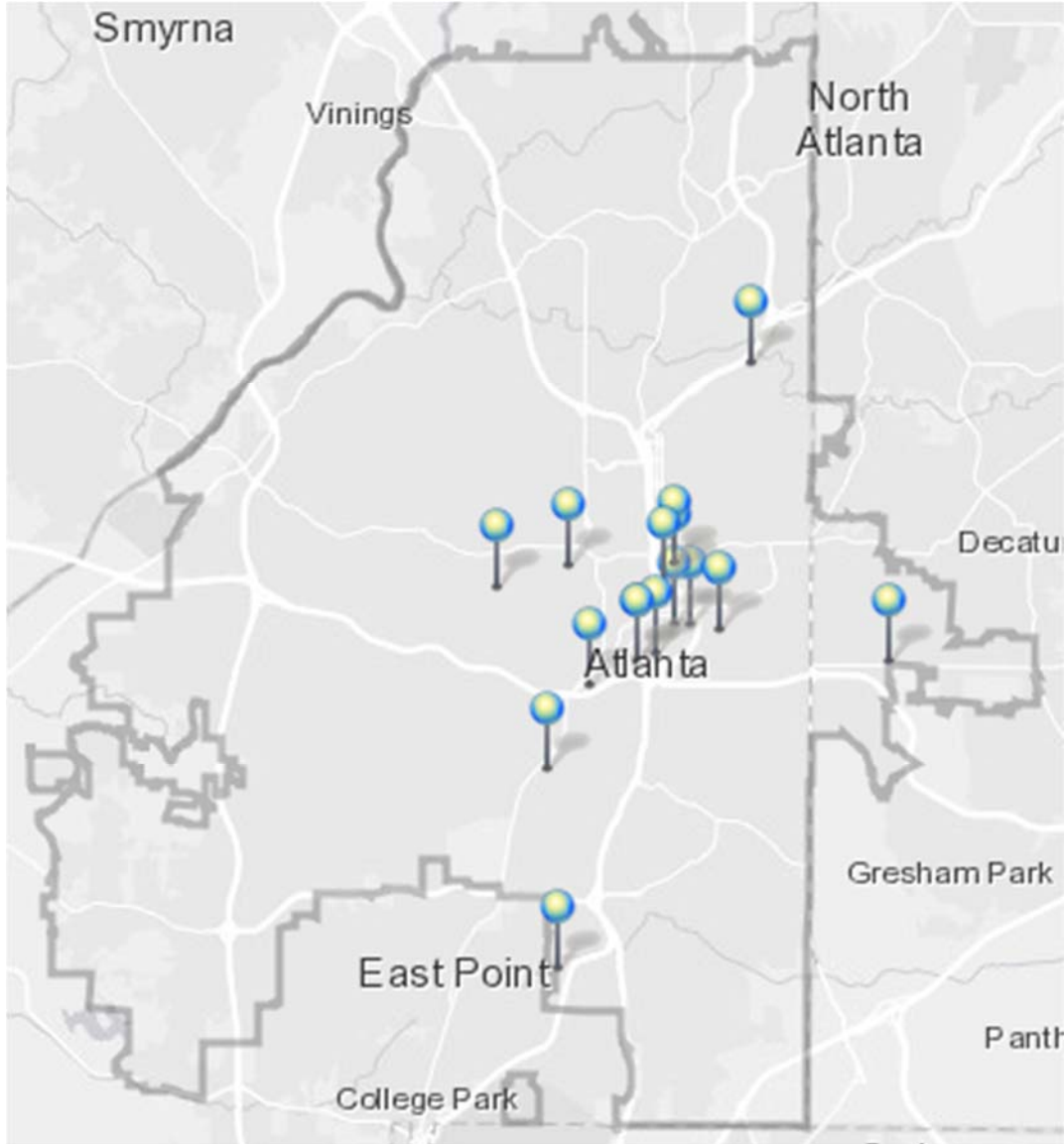
Permanent and Transitional Housing Services



Financial Services



Additional Services (Education, Food Assistance, Workforce Development, etc.)



Appendix 2 - Homeless Service Providers

Partner	Service	Address	Alternate Address
Action Ministries Atlanta	Transitional and Permanent Housing, Food	458 Ponce De Leon Ave NE, Atlanta, GA 30308	
Atlanta Legal Aid Society	Financial Assistance	54 Ellis St. NE Atlanta, GA 30303	777 Cleveland Ave. SW, Atlanta, GA 30315
Atlanta Outreach Project, Inc.	Transitional and Permanent Housing	PO box only	
CHRIS Kids	Financial Assistance Transitional and Permanent Housing	1017 Fayetteville Road Atlanta, GA 30316	
Families First	Transitional and Permanent Housing	80 Joseph E. Lowery Blvd NW, Atlanta, GA 30314	25 Newcastle St SW, Atlanta, GA 30314
Latin American Association	Financial assistance	2750 Buford Hwy NE, Atlanta, GA 30324	
Nicholas House, Inc.	Transitional and Permanent Housing	830 Boulevard SE, Atlanta, GA 30312	250 Georgia Ave SE, Atlanta, GA 30312
Partnership Against Domestic Violence	Transitional and Permanent Housing	No location - just services	
Salvation Army	Financial Assistance Transitional and Permanent Housing Assessment	400 Luckie St NW, Atlanta, GA 30313 (shelter)	
Sullivan Center	Financial Assistance	643 Dill Ave SW, Atlanta, GA 30310	740 Marietta St NW, Atlanta, GA 30318 (store and rehab center)
YWCA of Northwest Georgia, Inc.	Transitional and Permanent Housing	957 North Highland Ave NE Atlanta, GA 30306	
Back on My Feet	Employment, training, education	No location	
Crossroads	Transportation, identification services, stabilization program	420 Courtland St. NE, Atlanta, GA 30308	
First Step	Employment services	236 Auburn Ave, Atlanta GA 30303	

Hope Atlanta Traveler's Aid	Financial Assistance Transitional and Permanent Housing	34 Peachtree Street Building Atlanta, GA 30303	
Mercy Care Clinic	Health services	275 Pryor St SW, Atlanta, GA 30303	
Georgia Works	Employment	275 Pryor Street	
Atlanta Children's Shelter	Shelter	607 Peachtree St NE, Atlanta, GA 30308	
Atlanta Mission: The Shepherd's Inn	Shelter	165 Ivan Allen Jr. Blvd NW, Atlanta, GA 30313	
Atlanta Day Shelter for Women and Children	Shelter	655 Ethel St NW, Atlanta, GA 30318	
Atlanta Mission: My Sister's House	Shelter	921 Howell Mill Rd NW, Atlanta, GA 30318	
City of Refuge Inc.	Shelter	1300 Joseph E. Boone Blvd NW, Atlanta, GA 30314	
Our House	Shelter	173 Boulevard NE, Atlanta, GA 30312	
Covenant House Georgia	Shelter	1559 Johnson Road NW, Atlanta, GA 30318	
Atlanta Mission Fuqua Hall	Shelter	144 Mills St NW, Atlanta, GA 30313	
Trinity Community Ministries	Shelter	2643, 21 Bell St NE, Atlanta, GA 30303	
Salvation Army	Shelter	469 Marietta Street Atlanta, GA 30313	
Homes of Light, LLC	Shelter	1800 Memorial Dr. SE G3, Atlanta, GA 30317	
Gateway Center	Shelter	275 Pryor St SW, Atlanta, GA 30303	
Buckhead Christian Ministry Sheltered	Shelter	2847 Piedmont Rd NE, Atlanta, GA 30305	
Rebecca's Tent	Shelter	1180 University Dr NE, Atlanta, GA 30306	

Atlanta City Baptist Rescue Mission	Shelter	316 Peters St SW, Atlanta, GA 30313	
City of Refuge	Warming center, housing, food	1300 Joseph E Boone Blvd	
Trinity United Methodist Church	Warming center	265 Washington St SW, Atlanta, GA 30303	
City Baptist Rescue Mission	Warming center	316 Peters St. SW Atlanta, GA 30313	
Donna Center	Warming center, housing, additional		
My Sister's House	Warming center	921 Howell Mill Rd NW, Atlanta, GA 30318	
The United Way	Additional services	40 Courtland St NE #300 Atlanta, GA 30303	
PCCI	Case management	302 Decatur St SE, Atlanta, GA 30312	
Midtown assistance center	Transportation, referrals, food assistance, additional services	30 Porter Pl NE Atlanta, GA 30308	
Atlanta center for self sufficiency	Workforce readiness services	460 Edgewood Ave SE Atlanta, GA 30312	
Central Presbyterian Church Atlanta	Shelter	201 Washington St SW Atlanta, GA 30303	
Another Chance of Atlanta	Temporary housing	777 Cleveland Ave SW Atlanta, GA 30315	
Hope through Soap	Personal care services	No permanent location	
Evolution Center	Shelter	583 Juniper St NE #1 Atlanta, GA 30308	
Jefferson place	Shelter		

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